

BRITISH DIPLOMACY BEFORE 1914

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Cabinet, and I had my first sight of it twenty years ago in Lord Morley's library at Wimbledon. The German translator of the *British Documents*, Hermann Lutz, has written a little book called *Crowe, the Evil Spirit of the Foreign Office*, and his influence cannot be ignored by any student of the period. Grey, it is true, while listening to his advisers, kept the final decisions in his own hands. Yet we must not under-estimate the significance in the formation of policy and opinion of a man whose Gennanophobe attitude was so pronounced, whose pen was so active, and whose ability was so great. Grey himself described him as anti-German. No one would dream of comparing him with Holstein, whose figure was shrouded in mystery, for British Civil Servants do not play tricks with their chief. Yet it is no exaggeration to say that, as Holstein towers above the officials of the Wilhelmstrasse, so Crewe stands out in sharp relief. His discovery by a larger public at home and abroad is due to the *British Documents on the Origins of the War*.

The Crowe Memorandum begins with a sketch of the making of the Anglo-French entente and of Germany's attempts to destroy the tender plant before it took root. It had begun as a friendly settlement of outstanding disputes, but as a result of the Morocco crisis there had emerged an element of common resistance to dictation and aggression. The Algeciras Act had settled the Morocco problem for the moment, but a far larger question remained. Was the antagonism to Germany into which England had been led on this occasion without her wish or intention a passing incident, or was it a symptom of some deep-seated natural opposition between the policies and interests of the two countries ? Crowe adopts the latter

alternative, and rektes his attitude to the two traditional principles of British policy, namely maritime supremacy and the 'Balance of Power. Its general character, he reminds us, is determined by our position as an island State, with a vast overseas empire whose existence and survival depend on naval supremacy. Sea-power is more potent than land-power, because it is as pervading as the element in which it moves and has its being. A predominant maritime State which abused its power would be liable to be overthrown by a general combination. In our case the danger has been averted—and can only be averted—by harmonizing our policy with the interests of as many other nations as possible. How is this to be done? By maintaining their independence. England is the 'natural